

Washington, DC – Wednesday, Congressman Harry Teague voted to support our troops and veterans by ensuring critical funding for veterans health services and the construction of key facilities for training and housing our military. The legislation also continues this Congress's first-ever advance appropriations, which Teague helped to secure to ensure timely and reliable funding for veterans' services.

"We've taken great steps to improve the benefits and services available to the many veterans that rely on them throughout southern New Mexico. Today, we built on that record by making sure that funding for veterans health benefits keeps pace with the needs of a nation at war and never gets delayed because of political showmanship," said Harry Teague, New Mexico's only member on the House Veterans Affairs Committee. "This legislation will help expedite the claims process so that our veterans do not have to fight to get the services they earned through their brave service."

In addition, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, strengthens the VA workforce to tackle claims backlogs and to process new educational benefits provided through the new GI Bill enacted in the last Congress, under Democratic leadership. And, it allows the VA to process newly eligible claims for disabilities of Vietnam veterans and their survivors due to exposure to Agent Orange. The legislation also provides new family caregiver benefits for disabled veterans, benefits that were authorized by law in Teague legislation earlier this year.

With passage of this bill, since January 2007, this Congress will have provided a 70 percent increase in funding for veterans' health care and benefits, over 10,000 new claims processors to reduce VA case backlogs, 3,389 new doctors and 14,316 new nurses, 145 new community-based vet outpatient clinics, and 92 new vet centers.

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act also included \$8 million in funding to support the F-22 mission at Holloman Air Force Base (HAFB). The funding, secured by Harry Teague, will provide for the construction of a new runway for the fleet, which will reduce the possibility of damage to the engines by debris and save the mission millions of dollars in repairs.

“It is critical that we keep the facilities on Holloman Air Force Base in the best condition possible. As a single foreign debris incident can render an engine useless without major repairs, this new runway will ensure that these planes are operating at their best without spending millions of dollars on repeated repairs, and provide our service men and women with the equipment and resources they need to adequately protect our country,” said Harry Teague.

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The bill also addresses critical military construction needs to train and house our troops. It accelerates the Army’s program to modernize troop housing for trainees, addresses unfunded construction requirements of our Guard and Reserve and expedites the environmental cleanup on closed military bases.

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

Key Investments for Southern New Mexico:

Holloman Parallel Taxiway, Runway - \$8,000,000

Due to the high susceptibility of the F-22A to engine damage caused by ingesting Foreign Object Debris (FOD), F-22A operations require pavements free of FOD. If this project is not executed, all F-22A Raptor operations will remain susceptible to extremely costly FOD damage. Each engine in an F-22A costs over \$6M and a single FOD incident can render an engine useless without major repairs. Given the fact that other installations operating the Raptor have already experienced severe FOD damage incidents, a project costing just under the price of one single F-22A engine pays for itself in short order. Failure to train aircrews in the world's premier airborne weapons platform will greatly reduce the ability of the U.S. Air Force to project global airpower dominance in defense of the nation.

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Holloman AFB UAS Alternate Maintenance Hangar - \$15,470,000

This project supports the AF objective of increasing UAS Combat Air Patrol (CAP) rates in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Adequate facilities are necessary to establish a second Formal Training Unit (FTU) to achieve the increased CAP goal. The Maintenance Hangar 301 is required for performing routine sortie generation actions on assembled air vehicles. The AMU and Maintenance Shop are required to provide UAS backshop support capability and to provide support for personnel assigned to sortie generation tasks, launch & recovery activities, and weather monitoring.

Holloman AFB UAS Maintenance Hangar - \$22,500,000

MQ-1 and MQ-9 airframes require covered parking and maintenance space for all PAA. Given current and future PAA numbers generated by impending force structure changes at the UAS Flight Training Unit (FTU) II, Holloman AFB (HAFB) will require additional covered aircraft parking and maintenance space. HAFB covered parking and maintenance space requirement will exceed existing capacity in Mar 2010 and will continue to grow to a total deficit of 12 airframes in Sep 2012. If sufficient covered aircraft parking and maintenance space is not made available in a timely fashion, the required number of mission capable UAS required to meet training needs will not be available. Instead, vital training assets will be left in storage caskets and training missions will be limited. Without sufficient training missions, the UAS FTU II cannot sustain the required training syllabus and therefore cannot produce the required number of trained aircrews needed to support war-zone combatant commanders.

White Sands Missile Range Barracks -\$29,000,000

This requirement is needed to support the troop increase requested by the Secretary of Defense as part of the Grow the Army (GTA) initiative. This project supports "Echelons Above Brigade" (EAB) units to be stationed at this installation as part of the increase in permanent end strength of the Army. EAB's consist of essential Combat Support/Combat Service Support (CS/CSS) units. The maximum barracks utilization is 296 Soldiers. The intended utilization is 204 Junior Enlisted and 46 Sergeants.

White Sands Missile Range Health and Dental Clinics - \$22,900,000

Built 46 years ago, in 1964, as a small hospital the now antiquated separate medical and dental buildings are incapable of providing modern outpatient medical and dental care to soldiers and family members. The current facility is antiquated and inefficient. WSMR is remotely located 40 miles south of William Beaumont Medical Center (WBAMC). High risk training activities occur at WSMR and the next closest 24 hour emergency medical services are located in Las Cruces, NM which is 28 miles away.

